DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 386 UD 030 314

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TITLE Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Teaching. ERIC/CUE Digest Number 104.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-UD-95-1; ISSN-0889-8049
PUB DATE Feb 95
CONTRACT RR93002016
NOTE 4p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Box 40, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027 (free).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Americans; *College Faculty; Doctoral Degrees; Elementary Secondary Education; *Enrollment; Higher Education; Masters Degrees; *Pacific Americans; Population Trends; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest reviews available data on Asians and Pacific Islanders (API) to assess their presence in the teaching profession. Although they are a rapidly expanding part of both the population and school enrollments, APIs constitute only one percent of all teachers, and are largely absent from teacher preparation programs, with their mean registration in such programs at about one percent. A national study conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (ACTE)/Metropolitan Life (1990) surveyed 472 students from 42 colleges of education on their teacher preparation experiences. Only 18 API students were included in the sample. Of those in teacher education programs, only one-third aspired to Master's degrees, as compared to 41 percent of Hispanics, 54 percent of Blacks, and 70 percent of Whites. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 1994 show that APIs also constitute only 1.5 percent of teacher education faculty. APIs do receive doctorates in other non-education fields at disproportionately high rates. Understanding why APIs do not see teaching as an attractive profession, and the barriers that might prevent them from teaching is important for the effort to build a truly inclusive teaching force. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON URBAN EDUCATION

DIGEST

Number 104, February 1995 EDO-UD-95-1 ISSN 0889 8049

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ED 379 386

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ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN TEACHING

Introduction

The nation's schools are increasingly multiracial even as the teaching force continues to be predominantly white. This juxtaposition of burgeoning "minority" school populations against dwindling numbers of "minority" teachers has drawn much scholarly attention (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1990a). Yet, few studies include data on Asian and Pacific Islander (API) teachers (for example, Darling-Hammond, Pittman, & Ottinger, 1987), rendering information partial, at best. This digest reviews available data on APIs in order to assess their presence in the teaching profession.

API Teachers and Students: An Unequal Equation

A rapidly expanding portion of both the population and school enrollments (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992a), APIs constitute only one percent of all teachers (AACTE, 1990a; 1994). APIs are largely absent from teacher preparation programs, despite a 22 percent increase in their college participation rates between 1989 and 1991. In fact, mean API registration in teacher education programs hovers at about one percent, with an average of eight API preservice teachers enrolled annually. While mean teacher education enrollments have increased among all ethnic groups, including APIs, there is still negligible API enrollment (under one percent) in colleges of education in 39 of 50 states; the greatest percentages of API education majors are clustered in only eight states in the Western United States (AACTE, 1994).

A national study conducted by AACTE/Metropolitan Life (AACTE, 1990b) surveyed 472 students from 42 colleges of education on their teacher preparation experiences. Though the sample included only 18 API students, most teacher education studies have excluded APIs altogether, so the AACTE study can offer critical insight into API experiences and perceptions.

Some of the more salient findings were that API teacher education students were likely to have attended predominantly API high schools but were more likely than other "minority" teacher education students to attend mostly white universities. This may explain why more APIs assessed their teacher education institutions as insensitive to minority concerns than did African Americans or Latinos. Half of the APIs surveyed saw the baccalaureate as the highest degree they would attain, as compared to 17 percent of whites, 9 percent of blacks, and 11 percent of Hispanics. Only one-third of API respondents aspired to Master's degrees as compared to 41 percent of Hispanics, 54 percent of blacks, and 70 percent of whites. This is problematic given the fact that post-baccalaureate study is usually required for permanent teacher certification.

Half the APIs studied were in elementary education, about a third in early childhood education, with the balance specializing in secondary and special education. About half were simultaneously pursuing liberal arts majors. None was specializing in bilingual education. Finally, only one-third of the API students considered English their native language while 31.3 percent came from families earning less than $15 thousand a year.

Any discussion of APIs in teacher education must include faculty. In 1992, API faculty of all ranks numbered just under 43,000 with men outnumbering women four to one. Given an overwhelmingly white and female teacher education professoriate and the low numbers of API women faculty in general, it is not surprising that APIs constitute only 1.5 percent of education faculty (NCES, 1994) even while APIs are well-represented in the non-education doctoral pool (Brown, 1988). Compounding the shortage of API education faculty is the concentration of API doctorates in engineering and computer sciences, and the fact that API PhDs enter academia at rates lower than the national average (Brown, 1988).

APIs in the Education Pipeline

Chinn and Wong (1992) report that a number of studies surveying the career choices of API college students identify business/management and engineering as frequent first choices for the largest numbers of respondents, while education invariably ranked poorly. Under four percent of API college students prepare for teaching careers as compared to nearly 12 percent of all college students.

These data are confirmed by an examination of Bachelor's degrees conferred on API graduates during the 1989-90 year. Education ranked thirteenth of 29 fields of study, with only 931 APIs earning Bachelor's degrees in education (Gall & Gall, 1993). This disturbing trend is repeated in a recent survey of tenth graders' occupational expectations (NCES, 1992a). While more than half of the API tenth graders surveyed expected to be working in professional, business, or managerial fields by age 30, only 1.7 percent saw themselves as teachers. Out of 13 occupational choices, teaching ranked higher than only four—farmer, homemaker, laborer, and service worker.

The prognosis for higher education faculty is equally dim. In 1989-90, APIs received 4.9 percent of all doctorates but only 1.7 percent of doctorates in education. This represents a 0.2 percent loss compared to 1988-89, and a 0.7 percent loss when compared to 1987-88 figures (Thurgood & Weinman, 1990). During the same period, African Americans increased their percentage of education doctorates from 7.5 to 8.2, and Latinos from 2.9 to 3.3. In fact, 125 APIs received education doctoral degrees in 1988-89, but only 95 earned them in 1989-90 (NCES, 1992a). This statistic becomes more alarming when coupled with findings from a survey of teacher education students (AACTE, 1990b) where only 16.8 percent of API respondents aspired to doctorates as compared to 49 percent of Hispanics and 37 percent of blacks.

Why this is so is unclear. Since APIs do receive doctorates at disproportional rates, they are considered to be over-represented in higher education. Thus, they may not be actively recruited by doctoral programs. Also, the cost of completing

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a doctorate may appear prohibitive to API teacher education students who are likely to come from families who are struggling financially. Understanding why API high schoolers and college students seem not to perceive teaching as a viable career demands an analysis of what draws individuals to the field and the impediments which deflect them.

Entering Teaching: Motivations and Impediments

In a study of 22 API licensed and preservice teachers (Goodwin & Genishi, 1994), three reasons emerged as most important for choosing teaching—making a difference or engaging in meaningful work (73 percent), a love for children/interactions with young people (60 percent), and a love of learning/being in schools (53 percent).

The study also asked APIs to identify barriers that might deter them from teaching. The perception of teaching as unintellectual was ranked by two-thirds of respondents as a primary obstacle. About half also cited teachers' salaries and the perception of teaching as low status work. While these are weighty barriers to most individuals who think about teaching (Goodwin, 1991), Goodwin and Genishi's study revealed another impediment: the influence of immigrant status. In API cultures, career choices may be governed by two factors:

1) individual decisions to enter any profession may be linked to the community's struggle to "make it" in America; and
2) as first or second generation immigrants, many Asian Americans do not have a long established financial or social base. Thus, APIs in the teaching pipeline are likely to be responsible for building these bases for their families.

These factors notwithstanding, APIs, like other racial groups, are drawn to the teaching profession by intrinsic rewards that transcend status or salary (Goodwin, 1991). Yet, despite the fact that APIs are seriously underrepresented in teaching ranks at both precollegiate and postsecondary levels, and that contemporary conversations about "minority" teacher shortages have emphasized ways of attracting "minorities" to teaching, APIs are often ineligible for many special recruitment projects, fellowships, and state programs designed to increase the number of teachers of color. This may be attributed to pervasive perceptions of APIs as "model minorities," high achievers who attend college at ever increasing rates and are therefore in need of little affirmative action assistance. Yet, this review has revealed that many APIs who do choose to teach do not conform to "model minority" stereotypes and are likely to benefit from teacher recruitment programs.

Recommendations

As long as APIs are underrepresented, the American teaching force cannot be considered inclusive. Incentives to attract APIs to teaching include the following (Goodwin & Genishi, 1994):

- financial aid and scholarship packages;
- API or "minority" faculty;
- recruiters and counselors sensitive to API student needs;
- special supports such as academic or counseling services;
- cultural and social events, and support groups for API and other ethnic students;
- the infusion of content relevant to APIs into teacher preparation courses; and
- increased opportunities to work with API practitioners in the field.

These incentives can only materialize if educators and policy makers believe that it *is* important to recruit APIs. Indeed, while the rhetoric of education reform purports to be inclusive, practice has been exclusionary. This is not to imply that African American or Latino teachers are not in critical need or that Asian American and Pacific Islanders are needed even more; such arguments are divisive and counterproductive. The real issue is that to meet the needs of a pluralistic society Asian Americans should be seen as a deserving of the attention of teacher educators and schools in terms of hiring and recruitment.

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This Digest was developed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract. no. RR93002016. The opinions in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

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